

THE HERITAGE OF THE LAST ARHAT

A Lecture by

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**"THE NOBLER A SOUL IS, THE MORE OBJECTS OF
COMPASSION IT HATH."**

—BACON.

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By birth and education, every one of us has been placed within the sphere of power of one or another of the great human civilizations, which exercised its influence on our bodily and mental training, and on the whole development of our personality, and even impressed on the mind of the majority, the stamp of its particular religious dogma. Strengthened by history, tradition, custom and convention, this network of influences fettered the individual nearly as firmly as those bonds of kinship do, that connect him with the race of his ancestors.

Relativity
of Religious
Truth.

Still, as those bonds of kinship do not hinder a person from attaching himself with even stronger bonds, bonds of love and friendship, bonds of fellowship and mental affinity, to other, distant persons, just so that other bondage must not keep anybody back from glancing around himself, discovering merits in heterogeneous religions, and measuring his own conceptions by the noblest of theirs.

But then how to judge of the merit of a religion, how to know what is noble in it? Is not one single religion, isolated from its sister-religions, like the isolated petal of a flower, the isolated note of a melody? Is it not, in its onesidedness, comparable to the opinion of a single one of that group of blind men, who, standing before an elephant for the first time in their lives, tried to define its nature. The first, who happened to touch its forehead, declared the elephant to be a big stone; the second, from the touch of one of its tusks, defined it as a pointed weapon; the third, after touching the trunk, said the elephant was a leather bag; the fourth caught hold of one of the ears, and defined the whole animal as a flapping

fan ; the fifth, after passing his hand over its body, declared it to be a mountain ; the sixth, who had touched one of the legs, said the elephant was a pillar ; and the seventh described it as a piece of rope, because he had just caught hold of the tail. Each of them grasped only part of the nature of the actual thing, and just so, each of the various religions on earth appears to make us see a different aspect of Truth Divine. How then are we entitled to speak of merit in one or another of them ?

As a matter of fact, the individual, whenever acting, endeavours to act so as to establish, or to maintain, an optimum (*i.e.* best possible degree) of physical well-being, in response to its innate egotistic instincts. In this activity, it feels itself, often and again, checked by another kind of inner voices, which (no matter whether they be called conscience, or categorical imperative, or social instincts, or whatever else), regularly warn it, whenever egotism tempts it to transgress one or another of the universal commandments of ethics, and to endanger, thereby, directly or indirectly, the well-being of the social body to which it belongs. Life seems to be nothing but an attempt of the individual to keep itself balancing, as it were, on the delicate line of demarcation between the postulates of egotism and those of ethics, avoiding to hurt its own interests on one, and those of society on the other side. This state of equilibrium is experienced, by the refined mind, as the optimum of inner happiness attainable under the given juncture of circumstances. It is that bliss, that "Peace of God", which religion promises to its followers.

For religion has always considered it its task to indicate that line of demarcation, winding along between those two postulates. Every religion has approached this task with boldness and determination, and in its own

peculiar way, following its own particular character and tradition. If a religion has succeeded in fulfilling its task well, its doctrines must guarantee a state of perfect and permanent harmony between the well-being of the individual and that of society under whatever conditions imaginable. It is obvious that reversely; the degree and constancy of perfection characterizing the harmony of the above two factors, must allow us to judge of the merit of the religion by which it is being vouched for.

Measured by this standard, there can be no question as to the high value of Jainism, that time-honoured religion, which goes back to the teachings of Vardhaman Mahavira, the great contemporary and countryman of Gautama Buddha, and to his predecessors: for its teachings seem to guarantee indeed "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" not only of men, but of living beings, in all circumstances imaginable. This is why I make bold to draw your attention on this extraordinarily fascinating and important subject to-day.

According to Jainism, everything that lives has got a soul, or, to speak in the beautiful, concise language of the Scriptures, is a soul. And all the souls are fellow-creatures: the godlike recluse in his purity and unshakable peace, the active man of the world with his never resting ambitions, the innocent infant and the criminal, the lion and the nightingale, the cobra and the dragon-fly, the green leaf and the rose flower, the tiniest particle of water and the smallest of the corpuscles that compose the shining crystal, each of those myriads of beings that form the wings of the breeze, and of those that waver in the scarlet glow of fire: all are fellow-creatures, all are brothers. For all have got bodies, all have got senses, all have got instincts, all take food and digest it, all multiply, all are

Perfect
Social
Welfare
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born and die, all are capable of suffering and enjoying, and all bear the germs of perfection within themselves. That means, all are able to develop, during the long chain of their respective existences subsequent to one another, their innate dispositions of perception, knowledge, activity, and joy, to a degree of highest perfection. And all find themselves placed in the middle of the struggle against "*Karma*."

"Karma" designates that substance which we incessantly assimilate by our bodily and mental activity, and which remains latent in the depths of our personality, until it "ripens" at the critical moment, destining the whole complex of our personality as far as it is foreign to "soul", and shaping our whole fate. We bind Karma by walking and speaking, by eating and breathing, by loving and hating, by helping and harming. And a different activity produces a different kind of Karma, which may ripen either immediately, or after some time, on one or another of our subsequent existences.

यादृशं क्रियते कर्म तादृशं भुज्यते फलम् ।

यादृशमुप्यते बीजं तादृशं प्राप्यते फलम् ॥

"To the actions we do, corresponds the result we have to incur, as the fruit corresponds to the seed that has been sown."

By acting in such a way as to do harm to others, we produce a Karma which will make us suffer to the adequate extent, and by acting so as to benefit others, we store up an adequate amount of latent happiness. There are moreover, actions which destine our bodily constitution, our surroundings, and the length of our life, and there are actions which destine the limit within which we are allowed to perceive and to know, to enjoy and to be successful.

Thus, to bind Karma by good deeds, means to secure

the basis of a happy lot; to bind bad Karma, by evil deeds, means to sow the seeds of future sorrow; and to stop the bondage of Karma completely, leads, if coupled with the consumption of all the remaining latent Karmas, to an elimination of everything that is non-soul in our personality. It means self-realization, it means that final state in which the soul, free from all encumbrance, is soul and soul alone: soul in the fullest possession of perception, knowledge, strength, and joy. This is the state called Moksha, i.e. "Freedom", the "Salvation" of Jainism.

The acknowledgment of the Law of Karma as the commonest of all natural laws (the law of conservation of forces, as it were, in its application to the psychical sphere) culminates in the glorification of the *Principle of Ahimsa*, i.e. Non-injury, in Jainism. For, according to the law of Karma, a living being that causes a fellow-creature, even the lowest developed one, to suffer, be it in order to further its own advantage, or for any other reason, cannot do so without harming its own soul, i.e., without tumbling down a greater or smaller distance from the height of inner development it has reached, and without experiencing, earlier or later, as a mechanical consequence, a disturbance of its own harmonious equilibrium. What means suffering to one, can never be a source of real joy to another, and wherever it appears to be so, it is because our means of perception hinder us from being aware of the slow, but sure effectiveness of this Law of "Eternal Justice." This explains why the saying "अहिंसा परमो धर्मः", i.e., "Non-injury is the highest of all religious principles," acts such an important part in the daily life of the religiously inspired Jaina, whose sensible heart, a psychical galvanometer, as it were, warns him of every disturbance of well-being in the community of fellow-creatures around him, and spontaneously causes him to insert the resistance

of self-control in the circuit of his own activity, or to restrain that of others in its proper course.

Strictly speaking, of all the religions that acknowledge the law of Karma in one shape or another, *i.e.*, practically of all the Indo-Aryan religions, it is Jainism with its all-comprising doctrine of soul, in which the principle of Ahimsa has got the highest theoretical as well as practical importance, and where its place is substantiated more logically than anywhere else. Moreover, Jainism (unlike various other religious systems) does not believe the soul to be completely helpless in its dependence on Karma, *i.e.* to be hopelessly condemned to act and react, like an automaton, upon the consequences of its former deeds, and to be therefore beyond all responsibility for its moral attitude and actions. But Jainism clearly states that the individual is gifted with a certain amount of freedom of will: a fact which none of all the writers on Jainism has up till now, duly emphasized. And still, this tenet forms one of the most important and most complicated chapters of the doctrine of Karma, as expounded exhaustively in the Jaina Scriptures. They state, it is true, that the soul is indeed constantly under the control of Karma, that its body and its sufferings and joys are indeed shaped by Karma, and that even those passions that shake it, and all the fatal instincts that arise in it, are predestined by Karma; but, on the other hand, they most emphatically declare that the soul is endowed with the power of breaking, by its free resolution and activity, the most obnoxious of the fetters of this very Karma, of destroying its own evil dispositions, and of suffocating the flames of all the various kinds of passion, before they can overpower it. That means nothing else but that the first and essential step towards religious activity is, according to Jainism, a pronounced act of free volition, and that the

soul is indeed, to a considerable extent, the lord of its own fate.

Thus, Jainism does not torpify its followers by the terrors of Karma, nor does it make them languish in unhealthy, effeminate fatalism, as many people think all Oriental religions do: but on the contrary, it trains the individual to become a true hero on the battle-field of self-conquest.

For it does presuppose a great deal of heroism on the part of the hearer, to make him fully realize the cruel irony of this play of life, *viz.*, how they all strive after happiness by all means of physical and mental activity, from eating, drinking, sleeping, dressing, up to sport and play, traffic and trade, art and science, strive after happiness at any cost, even at the cost of the well-being of others, and to reach, alas, just the contrary, *viz.*, the binding of undesirable Karma, and therewith latent sorrow and suffering. To make him realize all this, to make him know that he cannot even quietly sit and breathe without killing and harming life round about, killing and harming brother-souls, and adding thereby to the stock of his own misfortunes. To make him aware of it and still encourage him to take up the desperate struggle against this world of dark might within and round about him.

How can he take up this desperate struggle?

कहं चरे कहं चिट्ठे कहासे कहं सप ।

कहं भुंजंतो भासंतो पावं कम्मं न बन्धइ ॥

“How to walk, how to stand, how to sit, how to lie down, how to eat, and how to speak, without binding undesirable Karma?”

The Dasavaikalika Sutra (IV, 7 f.) after giving a detailed description of the harm people do to other crea-

tures merely by careless behaviour, puts these questions, and immediately lets the answer follow :

जयं चरे जयं चिह्ने जयमासे जयं सए ।

जयं भुञ्जतो भासंतो पावं कस्मिं न बन्धइ ॥

“By walking with care, standing with care, sitting with care, lying down with care, eating with care, and speaking with care, the binding of undesirable Karma can be avoided”.

The Acaranga Sutra discusses this subject in full breadth, and the Sutrakritanga Sutra, which goes more into the depth of the abstruse problem, goes so far as to state (II, 4) that the soul is binding bad Karma at any time whatsoever, even if it does not directly do evil actions, *i e.*, even in sleep, or in a state of unconsciousness. For, as a man who has made up his mind to kill a certain person at the first best opportunity, goes about with his murderous intention day and night, and as his subconscious mind is constantly filled with those hostile sentiments towards that person, just so the individual is constantly filled with hostile sentiments towards the whole of creation, as long as he is inwardly prepared to satisfy, as soon as they will arouse him, his physical instincts at the cost of the well-being of any other creature.

There is, according to the Sutras, only one way by which the individual can save himself from binding bad Karma, and that is the “*Pratyakhyana*”, *i.e.*, the solemn vow of restriction concerning harmful acting. For it is not enough not to do evil deeds, after all, but one must avoid them with full intention and deliberation. Thus, one can *e.g.*, vow not to eat meat, in order to give an assurance of safety, “*Abhayadana*”, the noblest of all gifts, to a large group of animals, one can vow to avoid eating at night, in order to put another kind of limit to

one's actions connected with indirect harm to others, one can vow not to wear silk or fur, or leather foot-wear, for the benefit of the animals producing it, one can vow not to break flowers, or not to kill any animal whatsoever, down to worms and insects, one can vow not to waste any articles of daily use, such as water, fire, food, clothes, beyond one's actual requirements, one can vow not to encourage the captivating and training of wild animals for the sake of sport or amusement, by avoiding to visit shows, etc., referring thereto, and one can vow to avoid thousands of similar actions connected with direct or indirect injury to other creatures. There are various kinds of Pratyakhyanas, from Pratyakhyanas of single actions of the above character, up-to the stereotype group of the five all-comprising Pratyakhyanas, called the Panca-Mahavrata, or the Five Great Vows, *viz.*, the Pratyakhyana of all physical injury whatsoever, that of all verbal injury, that of appropriating things arbitrarily, that of sexual intercourse and everything connected therewith, and that of keeping property or belongings of any kind. These five Vows are taken by every Jain monk at the time of his initiation in a form of absolute strictness. They comprise not only the doing of those objectionable actions, but also the causing of their being done and the approval one might give to their being done, by thought, word and action. The five Great Vows guarantee indeed the optimum of faultlessness attainable in this world. And this optimum is only attainable by persons of the highest qualities, who do not care to keep up any attachment whatsoever. Thus, a genuine Jaina Muni, even one of the twentieth century, will never use any vehicle, nor shoes, nor keep money, nor touch a woman, nor kindle, or sit before, a fire, nor use unboiled water, nor take any food containing a trace of life, nor such food as has been prepared expressly for him,

nor touch a green plant, for fear lest its delicate body might suffer from his bodily warmth, nor keep any property except his begging-bowls, his stick, and the scanty clothes that cover his body. And even these few things cannot well be called "property" in the sense of the Scriptures, because in their case, the characteristic which distinguishes property, *viz.*, the attachment of the owner, is wanting. And there are even a group of Jaina monks who renounce these few utensils too, walking about unclad, and using their hands as their eating vessels. But there are only a few of them, in the whole of India: the "Dig-Ambara" or Sky-clad monks, whereas the other branch, the "Svetambara" or White-clad monks, come to several hundreds.

The standard of the usual Pratyakhyanas for laymen consists in the group of fixed Pratyakhyanas called the Twelve Laymen Vows, which can be taken in various shades of strictness and in an optional number. Though standing below the standard of the ascetical vows, still they represent a high form of ethical conduct.

Not only the Jaina monks, but also the laymen are very particular about taking and keeping (besides those groups of fundamental "Vows", which are being taken only once in the whole life, and for lifelong) number of other, detached Pratyakhyanas of the above described character for an optional period. For the Pratyakhyana is the very key to "Moksha:" constant binding alone can lead to final "Liberty." Thus, there is practically no Jaina who will eat meat or fish or fowl, or even eggs, and there is no Jaina who will intentionally and without purpose kill or trouble a harmless living creature, be it even a fly. Most Jainas even avoid potatoes, onions, garlic, and other vegetables believed to be endowed with a higher vitality, as well as eating at night; and most Jainas take, for certain

days, the vow of abstention from green vegetables, or from travelling and moving out, or the vow of chastity, and vows of innumerable other things.

The theoretical and practical valuation of the different kinds and shades of Pratyakhyanas depends not only on their duration, or on the quantity of the objects concerned, but first of all on their transcendental quality. For though all the souls, *i.e.*, all the living creatures, are equal in their original disposition, still they are observed to be in various phases of development towards perfection, in various stages of self-realization. According to the principle of economy, the higher developed ones are higher valued than the lower developed ones. Therefore the Karma bound by harming a higher developed being is thought to be of graver consequences than that bound by injuring a lower creature. Thus, plucking a handful of vegetables is, by far, less harmful than killing a cow; killing a menacing tiger less harmful than the murder of a peaceful antelope; or punishing a dangerous criminal is of less consequences than an offence done to a saintly monk. This valuation, by-the-bye, seems to have a counterpart in those less refined, universally adopted conceptions, which, with all expressions of disgust, condemn cannibalism, but do not object to the slaughtering of animals for culinary and other purposes; or which strictly forbid the bloodshed of a human being, but allow the murdering of the murderer, or that of the assailing, or otherwise menacing, enemy, all of whom have ethics against them.

Thus much be said concerning the Pratyakhyana of Himsa, *i.e.*, Injury: that precaution against the binding of new latent suffering, by deliberate abstention from actions connected with harm to others.

It has its counterpart in the attempts of securing new latent happiness, by furthering the well-being of others.

Though there is no hope of gaining genuine, *i.e.*, completely pure and unhampered happiness as long as any particles of Karma of either kind mar the soul, still a certain amount of good Karma is a necessary condition, in order to secure that bodily and mental constitution from the basis of which the struggle against the obnoxious Karma particles can be successfully taken up. Good Karma is believed to be secured by charity, hospitality and selfless service. And here too, a gradation of objects can be observed. It is, of course, meritorious to practise charity wherever our heart is moved to compassion. It is meritorious to build Panjrapoles for the relief of poor sick animals, it is meritorious to provide the poor hungry with bread, people suffering from cold with clothes, and homeless ones with a roof over their heads: still nothing can come up to the service done to a poor pious brother in Mahavira. The more he comes up to the ideal laid down in the Scriptures, the higher is considered to be the merit of serving him. This explains the remarkable zeal with which one can see Sravakas (laymen) hasten to feast a brother Jaina, especially on the day when the latter breaks a fast of long duration; and it accounts for the readiness with which a Jaina Community or Jaina institution hastens to receive and to give facilities even to a foreign scholar, who happens to be a student of Jainism, and whose learned activity in connection with Jainism is considered to be an undoubted religious merit. And it explains, last but not least, the unspeakable pleasure and devotion with which a Jaina family sees approaching towards their door the saintly monk or nun, who will enter with the greeting of "Dharmalabha", or a similar formula, and will allow the lord or lady of the house to put a small quantity of eatables into their bowl, provided that this action includes no direct or indirect injury to

anybody, and that everything is in strictest accordance with the rules of monastic conduct and decency.

Now I have been asked several times whether it is true that the Jainas, as alleged, carry the virtue of charity so far as to cause, now and then, some poor wretch, (whom they pay off) to yield his body as a pasture-ground for lice and fleas and other amiable creatures, and let them have their fill. According to my firm conviction, this horrible allegation must be a bold invention. And if it is perhaps, against all probability, true that some ill-informed fanatic did such a thing, then he would have acted in straight opposition to the tenets of Jainism: for to make a being so highly developed as a human soul, suffer in such a degrading way, in the name of the humanest of all religions, would clearly fall under the heading of Himsa, of worst and meanest injury, and would, besides, mean a downright insult to Religion in general.

Resuming, one can say that the social conduct prescribed by Jainism is characterized by the four attitudes "*Maitri*", "*Pramoda*", "*Karunya*", and "*Madhyasthya*", which have been grouped together in the following stanzas:

मा कार्षीत् कोऽपि पापानि मा च भूत् कोऽपि दुःखितः ।

मुच्यतां जगदप्येषा मतिर्मेव निगद्यते ॥

अपास्ताशेषदोषाणां वस्तुतत्त्वावलोकनात् ।

गुणेषु पक्षपातो यः स प्रमोदः प्रकीर्तितः ॥

दीनेष्वार्त्तेषु भीतेषु याचमानेषु जीवितम् ।

प्रतीकारपरा बुद्धिः कारुण्यमभिधीयते ॥

क्रूरकर्मसु निःशङ्कं देवतागुरुनिन्दितम् ।

आत्मशंसिषु योपेक्षा तन्माध्यस्थ्यमुदीरितम् ॥

"By *Maitri*, i.e., amity, that mentality is meant which makes one wish that no creature should commit evil actions, that no creature should be

suffering, and that the whole universe may find Salvation."

"*Pramoda*, i.e., joy, designates the fullest appreciation of, and admiration for, the virtues of those who have shaken off all sin, and who can see through the essence of all things.

"*Karunya*, i.e., compassion, is that trend of mind which makes one wish to help all creatures in need, all that are afflicted, and all that beg for their lives."

"*Madhyasthya*, i.e., impartiality, is that indifference, or rather leniency one should always bear towards those who commit cruel actions, those who openly blaspheme the Divine, or the spiritual teacher, and those who are filled with arrogance."

It is clear that all such principles, put in action, guarantee such an amount of happiness and peace within the whole brotherhood of living creatures, such a paradise-like state of general bliss, that one should wish them to be universally adopted and followed, to the benefit of all that lives.

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On the other hand, it is true, they presuppose what appears to be a kind of sacrifice on behalf of the individual.

This apparent sacrifice at the cost of which that state of general well-being is being brought about, consists in a certain amount of personal happiness, or of expedients of the latter, which the individual has evidently to renounce, in the case of even the most insignificant of the *Pratyakhyanas*, and in every one of its positive altruistic efforts.

It is clear that the equilibrium of personal and general well-being would indeed remain incomplete, and Jainism could not be said to have fulfilled its noble task in the ideal way claimed before, if the individual would feel the apparent sacrifice to be an infringement on its happiness. In reality, however, both the sides are in perfect equilibrium, for there are deliberations which not only reconcile the individual with that so-called "sacrifice", but make it realize that it is, on the contrary, benefitted by it, and that this benefit by far outweighs the apparent disadvantage.

First of all, the motivation of the very "sacrifice" is, as we saw, an egotistic one: for if the individual submits to those restrictions, it does so in order to avoid the binding of unfavourable Karma, and therewith the storing up of latent suffering; and if it recurs to those actions of positive altruism, it does so in order to bind favourable Karma, and to secure latent happiness.

And it performs both the kinds of actions, those of negative as well as those of positive altruism, with the assistance of certain of its own natural dispositions, which form part of its "conscience." I mean those emotions of sympathy and compassion, which make us place ourselves in the situation of a suffering creature, and suffer, as it were, with it, especially when we have reason to feel ourselves responsible for its sufferings, as in the case of a night-flutterer rushing into the light we allowed to burn uncovered, in our carelessness; or in the case of a bird which was starved in its cage through our forgetfulness, or in the case of a helpless deer which we killed with our own hand, in a fit of huntsman's zeal, and the sight of whose mutilated body makes us, after all, sick and miserable. It is that universal postulate which Hemacandra, the great Acharya and teacher of King Kumarapal of Gujarat, has expressed in that often-quoted stanza (Yogasastra II, 20).

आत्मवत्सर्वभूतेषु सुखदुःखे प्रियाप्रिये ।
चिन्तयन्नात्मनोऽनिष्टां हिंसामन्यस्य नाचरेत् ॥

“In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self, and should therefore, refrain from inflicting upon others, such injury as would appear undesirable to us, if inflicted upon ourselves.”

Akin to dispositions of this kind is a certain sense of chivalrousness, a certain generosity, which overcomes us, whenever we see a small innocent creature being at our mercy, provided our mind is calm enough to visualize its utter helplessness: that feeling which unfailingly overcomes even the case-hardened hunter, at the occasion of battue-shooting, and which makes him, perhaps for an instant only, regret to have joined such an ungentleman-like sport as this wholesale slaughter of helpless creatures surely is.

Another feeling of this kind is a certain instinct of economy, which, with sensible persons, proves a powerful pleader in favour of Ahimsa: I mean that spontaneous conviction that it is not right to kill, or to cause to be killed, such a highly organized creature as a pigeon or a deer or a cow in order to flatter one's gluttonous appetite, when a dish of well-dressed vegetables would serve the same purpose just as well, if not better.

The appeasement of all these, and others of our social instincts, by avoiding harming and trying to benefit, fellow-creatures, is, after all, in itself a valuable personal gain.

In addition to avoiding bad and securing good Karma, and to appeasing its innate social instincts, the individual gains, by its non-egotistic attitude, a third advantage,

which is perhaps the most valuable of all: it consists in the lasting and genuine bliss which renunciation only can give.

For what is the good of trying to gratify all one's wishes, all one's passions, all one's ambitions? Is the advantage gained thereby, indeed worth so much hankering, so much worrying, and so much harming? No, says the sage: the happiness we crave for, is transient like a dream, like a cloud, like beauty. It leaves the bitterness of its absence behind, as soon as it is passed, and it leaves behind, like a dose of opium, the ardent craving for more and more. It is just so as the Uttaradhyayana Sutra states (IX, 48):

सुवन्नरुपस्स उ पव्वया भवे सिया हु केलाससमा असंखया ।
नरस्स लुद्धस्स न तेहिं किंचि इच्छा हु आगाससमा अणंतिया ॥

"Let there be mountains of gold and silver, let them be as high as the Kailasa, and let there be innumerable of them: still to man in his greediness, all this will mean nothing. For desire is boundless like space."

So what is the good of a drop of nectar, when you are thirsty for a cup-ful? The cup-ful being denied to you, why bother about the drop? Shake off that foolish wish and forget it.

And further, if gained, the happiness you crave for, means possession. Possession of land or fortune, of houses or fields, of beauty or skill, of friends or family, of honour or reputation. And possession involves the sorrow of its maintenance. You have incessantly to take care of your land and of your fortune, you have to recur to lots of contrivances, if you want to preserve your beauty or to retain your skill, you have to bring sacrifice over sacrifice for your friends and your family, you tremble for their lives, when sickness shakes them, and suffer agonies when

rate separates you from them, and the concern about his position and reputation has even proved able to urge a person to suicide and other desperate steps. In short, to speak in the words of Bhartṛihari, the great Sanskrit epigrammatic writer :

सर्वं वस्तु भयान्वितं क्षितितले वैराग्यमेवाभयम् ।

“Everything on earth is unstable. The only stable thing is Vairagya (*i.e.*, world-weariness).”

What is the good of a happiness including so much agony? What is the good of this feasting with the Damocles-sword of sorrow threatening above your head? Would it not be much better to give up all this possession guaranteeing such a doubtful happiness? To give it up as those saints of old did, of whom the Uttaradhyayana Sutra (IX, 15 f.) says:

चत्तपुत्तकलत्तस्स निव्वावारस्स भिक्खुणो ।

पियं न विज्झई किञ्चि अप्पियं पि न विज्झइ ॥

बहुं खु मुणिणो भद्मणागारस्स भिक्खुणो ।

सच्चतो विप्पमुक्कस्स एगंतमणुपस्सओ ॥

“To the begging monk, who has given up family-life and all secular activity, nothing appears desirable and nothing undesirable.”

“Great indeed is the bliss of the monk, the homeless beggar, who is free from all attachment, and who is aware of his solitude (which includes the metaphysical solitude of the soul).”

And then, says the wise, whether you hanker for its gain, or trouble for its preservation: all this happiness you are so particular about, means slavery in the last end. The anxiety you feel about it, fills your mind, and mars your thinking from morn till night, so that, in your

continuous worrying about your business, your position, your hobbies, your friends, your pleasures, and your wife and children, you do not find so much time as to ask yourself why you are doing all that, what you live for, and where you are steering to. You think that you do not care to ponder over it. But in reality, you are not free to do so, because you are the slave of your attachment to that empty, transient bit of happiness, which is, in reality, no happiness at all. Would it not be much better for you to be unconnected with all this, to be your own master, to be like the Rishis and Munis of old, who, in their solitary meditations, unhampered by secular considerations, without comfort and property, without wife and children, without ambition and position, were, in reality, the lords of the world?

अर्थानामर्जने दुःखमर्जितानां च रक्षणे ।

आये दुःखं व्यये दुःखं धिग् द्रव्यं दुःखवर्धनम् ॥

अपायबहुलं पापं ये परित्यज्य संश्रिताः ।

तपोवनं महासत्त्वास्ते धन्यास्ते तपस्विनः ॥

“The acquisition of property, and, if acquired, its preservation, both are connected with trouble. There is trouble in earning, and trouble in spending. Therefore, cursed be property, the increaser of unhappiness !”

“Blessed are those ascetics, great souls are those ascetics, who gave up sin, the producer of so much suffering, and who have found a place of refuge in the grove of a hermitage.”

It is not without reason that people in India have been giving to such “great souls”, titles like “Svami”, “Maharaj” and others, which, in olden times, were applicable only to the truly renouncing ascetics, who

were living examples of the fact that renunciation means power, and who indeed experienced the royal happiness of asceticism, where there is:

न च राजभयं न च चोरभयं
इहलोकसुखं परलोकहितम् ।
नरदेवनतं वरकीर्तिकरं
श्रमणत्वमिदं रमणीयतरम् ॥

“No fear of the king, no fear of robbers, happiness in this, and bliss in the next world, reverence shown by men and gods, and the acquisition of true fame: delightful is this ascetical life.”

Or, in other words:

न चेन्द्रस्य सुखं किञ्चिन्न सुखं चक्रवर्त्तिनः ।
सुखमस्ति विरक्तस्य मुनेरेकान्तजीविनः ॥

“Nothing is the happiness of the king of the gods. nothing the happiness of the emperor of the world, compared to the happiness of the world-weary monk in his solitude”.

All such considerations lead to the second great postulate of Jainism: *Samyama* or *Renunciation*, i.e. continuous self-control practised by giving up one's regards for physical happiness.

According to the Jaina conceptions, the individual is free to embrace whatever degree of renunciation he deems appropriate to his personal convictions and abilities. Just as Non-injury, *Samyama* also can be resorted to by various kinds of *Pratyakhyanas*. And, since Non-injury itself is not practicable without *Samyama*, and *Samyama*, on the other hand, vouchsafes Non-injury, the *Pratyakhyanas* concerning the former, practically fall together with those concerning the latter great principle. Thus, the climax of the *Pratyakhyanas* concerning Non-injury, viz.

the five Great Vows of monks: non-harming, non-lying, non-stealing, sexual renunciation, and non-property, form at the same time, also the climax of the Pratyakhyanas concerning Samyama. The object is all the same, it is only the stand-point that has changed. For to the duty of avoiding objectionable actions as far as they are fit to harm others, is being added the further obligation of avoiding them also as far as they are fit to disturb one's own equilibrium and calmness of mind, and to detract one from that religious activity so essential for one's real Welfare. Thus the Principle of Samyama stands in the foreground especially in such particulars as the absolute prohibition of heavy food, of aphrodisiacs, excessive sleep, sexual activity, intoxicating substances etc for monks, and in the obligation of laymen to give up some of these things partially and some totally. The explicit command of the Scriptures never to give way to any of the four fundamental passions, *viz.* anger, pride, deceit, and covetousness, of which the last includes all kinds of attachment to lifeless as well as living things, and many other regulations, fall likewise under this heading, notwithstanding their being rooted in Ahimsa after all.

Another important expedient of securing one's personal metaphysical advantage in fullest accordance with the laws of ethics, is very closely akin to, and based on, renunciation: I mean *Tapa*, *i.e.* *austerity*, or self-imposed suffering undertaken for religious reasons. The purpose which the Jaina has in view when practising austerities, can be understood from the idea that all suffering means a consummation of bad Karma. and that the voluntary undergoing of certain hardships has the further advantage of giving, at the same time, valuable assistance in the realization of the two great principles Ahimsa and Samyama. Thus:

सडणी जइ पंसुगुंडिया विहुणिय धंसयइ सियं रयम् ।
एवं दविओवहाणवं कम्मं खवइ तवस्सी माहणे ॥

(Dasavaikalika Sutra).

“As a bird, gets rid of the dust with which it is covered, by shaking itself, just so the monk, who practises austerities, consumes and shakes off his Karma”.

To get rid of Karma, is (as we saw before) the first step towards self-realization, and therewith to the highest transcendental bliss. This is the reason why austerity plays such an important part in the life of the Jaina, be he a monk or a layman. According to the Jaina Scriptures, there are various ways of practising austerities, all of which are being started with the respective Pratyakhyanas too, after their duration and other items have been accurately fixed. With reference to Tapa, there are Pratyakhyanas by which the quality, quantity, or time of one's meals is being reduced, from the simple giving up of special kinds of food, or of eating at night, and from partial fasts, and fasts of a whole day or several days, up to fasts of more than a month's duration. There are, moreover, Pratyakhyanas by which one binds oneself to practise certain ascetical postures, to meditate for a fixed time, to devote a certain time to the regular study of religious works, or to the service of co-religionists etc. Several forms of austerity are at the same time recommended as strengthening and hardening one's bodily and mental powers, as *e.g.* the *Ambil* Fast, a kind of bread-and-water diet (excluding all milk, fat, sugar, spices etc.) and also certain *Asanas*, or ascetic postures indeed do, if observed within certain limits. Of quite a different character is the austerity called *Sallekhana*, or *Samlekhana*, by which the individual

solemnly resigns all food for the rest of his life, under formalities dealt with in the Avasyaka Sutra, the whole last chapter of which is devoted exclusively to the subject "Pratyakhyana". This form of austerity is indeed being resorted to by very pious people at the time when they feel death positively approaching.

Thus it is true that under certain circumstances, Jainism does allow the vow of starvation. But it would be wrong to infer therefrom that its ideal is the extinguishment of personal activity at all. Just the contrary is true. Jainism promulgates self-realization as the aim of individual life: a self-realization which, at the same time, also forms the basis of the well-being of all that lives. The achievement of this self-realization presupposes, on the part of the individual, the highest exertion of all bodily and mental powers, a constant wakefulness, and an iron will, which precisely obeys the behests of intellect, bravely resisting all kinds of internal and external temptations. More practically speaking, 'it presupposes a reasonable kind of self-preservation in the narrowest limits possible. There is a parable, according to which six hungry travellers came to a mango-tree and consulted as to how best to obtain its fruit. The first suggested to uproot the whole tree, as the promptest expedient, the second said that it would just do to cut the crown, the third wanted to cut some taller, the fourth some smaller branches, the fifth suggested that they should merely pluck as many fruits as they required, and the last said that the ripe fruits which the wind had blown down into the grass, were amply sufficient to appease their hunger. The six men symbolize, in the above succession, the six *Lesya* or "soul-colours," representing types of graded inner purity. It is quite characteristic of the spirit of Jainism that the representative of the white

colour; *i.e.*, the type of highest purity, advises to eat the fruits fallen into the grass, but not, as absolute and one-sided negation of life would suggest, to sit down in fullest renunciation, and die of hunger.

The postulate of Self-preservation within the reasonable limits of ethical decency is clearly and directly pronounced in the Jain Scriptures, which, in critical cases, recommend it even at the cost of renunciation or Samyama :

सर्वत्र नंजमं संजमाओ अप्पाणमेव रक्षिस्वज्जा ।

मुच्चइ अइवायाओ पुणं विसोही न याविरइ ॥

संजमहेउ देहो धारिज्जाइ सो कओ उ तदभावे ।

संजमपाइनिमित्तं देहपरिपालना इट्ठा ॥

(Oghaniryukti. Stanzas 47-48.)

“Before all, one should guard the rules of renunciation, but even at the cost of renunciation, one should guard one’s self. For one can get rid again of the sin of transgression, if one atones for it afterwards (by austerities), and it is, as a matter of fact, not a case of Avirati (*i.e.*, the state of not being under any Pratyakhyana whatsoever, or the state of religious licentiousness)”.

“The body is the instrument of renunciation. How could a man perform renunciation without the help of his body ? Therefore, it is desirable to preserve one’s body in order to increase one’s Samyama.”

Thus, even the rules laid down for monks, - for these two stanzas refer to monastic conduct, - stand under the immediate influence of this principle. The monk, it is true, is supposed to fast and to renounce, to observe absolute chastity, to meditate and to suffer all kinds of

inconveniences and hardships ; but he has, on the other hand, to follow special prescriptions as to how to accept, within narrow limits, pure food and other requisites offered, how to walk and how to sleep, how to sit and how to speak, how to serve fellow-ascetics, and how to receive their service, how to preach and how to dispute, how to work and how to move in the world as it is, with its saints and its criminals, its laymen and laywomen, its Hindus and Bauddhas, its scholars and peasants, and its kings and beggars.

In short, he is taught how to regulate his whole bodily and mental activity in such a way as to be in constant and undisturbed harmony with all that lives around him, under all conditions given. He is shown the way how to secure the optimum of his own personal happiness in such a manner as to contribute, even thereby, to the welfare of the world. Or he is taught how to help making the world more perfect by increasing his own perfection.

Thus, the very secret of Jainism is contained in the three important words *Ahimsa* or Non-injury, *Samyama*, or Renunciation, and *Tapa*, or Austerity : words which the famous first stanza of the Dasavaikalika Sutra so beautifully groups together as the essence of *Dharma*, i.e., Religion :

धम्मो मंगलमुक्किट्ठमहिंसा संजमो तवो ।

देवाऽपि तं नमस्संति जस्स धम्मे सया मणो ॥

“Religion is the highest of all blessings : it comprises *Ahimsa*, *Samyama*, and *Tapa*. Even the gods bow down to him whose mind is always centred in Religion.”

Then the Sutra continues with the following classical verses, which are, like the above one, amongst the words to be daily recited by monks :

जहा दुम्मस्स पुप्फेसु भमरो आवियइ रसम् ।
 ण य पुप्फं किलामेइ सो अ पीणेइ अप्पयम् ॥
 एमेए समणा मुत्ता जे लोए संति साहुणो ।
 विहंगमा व पुप्फेसु दाणभत्तेसणारया ॥
 वयं च वित्तिं लब्भामो न य कोइ उवहम्मइ ।
 अहागडेसु रीयंते पुप्फेसु भमरा जहा ॥
 महुगारसमा बुद्धा जे भवंति अणिस्सिया ।
 नाणार्पिडरया दंता तेण बुच्चंति साहुणो ॥

“As the bee drinks honey from the blossoms of a tree and gets sated, without causing pain to the blossom,”

“Just so are those monks, who have given up all attachment and who are truly the “good ones” (original: “*Sadhu*”, i.e. also “*monks*”) in the world. As the bees are with the blossoms, so are they gratified with begging their alms.”

“Their device is “Let us find something to live on, without any creature being harmed”. This is why they go in quest of what they find ready, as the bee does on the blossoms.”

“Wise are those who act like the bees, and who are free from all bonds of dependence. Pleased they are with any food they obtain, and ever self-controlled. This is why they are called “*Sadhus*” (i.e. “the good ones” and “monks”).

The ideal of what human life can be like, and ought to be like, in the light of all these conceptions, is illustrated by the figure of the *Jina*, or *Arhat*, the supposed initiator of a new period of reawakening Jainism after a period of decay. Many such *Arhats* are related to have appeared on earth before, many are said to be living even

now in distant regions, and many, to be expected in future too. The *Jina* or *Arhat* is man on the summit of perfection, man at the threshold of *Moksha*, ready to enter *Siddhasila*, the place of eternal bliss, from where there is no return into this world of imperfection.

His *Karmas*, with the exception of some neutral ones, are fallen off from him, and the innate qualities of his soul are expanded in fullest beauty and majesty. He is omniscient, all-perceiving, filled with infinite joy and infinite strength. He is free from all passion and attachment, free from desire—for desire is nothing but an expression of imperfection—, and yet he is man, and has to keep his human body as long as the neutral rest of his *Karmas* force him to keep it. He is man, and, as one part of Jaina tradition, that of the Svetambar branch, so beautifully suggests, has to satisfy the requirements of his human body: he begs his food, and he eats and drinks, within the limits prescribed for a monk, since the rest of his *Karmas* require him to do so. And the rest of his *Karmas* also require him to live exclusively for the benefit of the world, *i.e.*, of those souls that are still in the bonds of dangerous *Karmas*. For as long as he lives in his human shape, he goes about, showing to the whole of creation, the right path, by preaching and teaching, and by the example of his own model life. And it is obvious that the activity and life of the Perfect One must indeed turn out to be a blessing, for he cannot but attract crowds of followers and imitators.

This is what the Jaina worships as his highest religious ideal, his "god", if one chooses to say so. He adorns his statue with pearls and diamonds, with roses and jasmine, and costly champak flowers, he fans it, as one fans a great king, with white chowries, he burns sweet frankincense before it, and builds beautiful temples

over it, beautiful and costly as fairy palaces, and he takes it round the city in gorgeous processions, on golden cars, followed by crowds of singing women in gay-coloured, gold-glittering sarees: still he knows that his god dwells high beyond all this, and that all this *bhakti*, or pious service, is nothing but an expression of his own admiration for his chosen ideal, and a kind of expedient to bring it closer before his eyes and the eyes of the world, both of whom are pretty well in need of it.

Jinahood shares the quality of all ideals, to be, in spite of—or perhaps just on account of—its undiminished and undiminishable attractiveness—high above the bodily and mental standards of its admirers and imitators. And even Jaina-monkhood, its reflection on the rough mirror of actual life, is high above the standard of average man, and will—owing to the diversity of human dispositions,—always remain restricted to a few privileged individuals, wanderers as it were on the heights of humanity. Since the institution of monkhood, and all the other institutions of Jainism, presuppose the world as it really is, and humanity as it really is, the Scriptures do not account for the question as to what would become of the universe, if all people would turn monks. Therefore it will always remain undecided whether that venerable Muni was right, who replied to the idle questioner that in such a case the good Karmas of mankind would cause wish-trees to grow, and streams of Amrita to flow, and gods to descend from their celestial abodes to serve their feet.

But even if it is not possible for everybody perfectly to come up to that ideal, still, merely acknowledging it to be an ideal, and trying to cultivate as many of its virtues as one's constitution allows, even thus much is considered to be a step towards advancement.

Necessity of
applying
Jaina Prin-
ciples to
Modern
Social Pro-
blems

This is, expressed just in a few words, what I think to be the innermost secret of Jainism, and what is, at the same time, a mental attitude without which a real advancement of human culture is not possible. We are living in a generation which, by all means imaginable, encourages a boundless egotism on one side, and on the other, an unrestrained violence offered to living creatures, in the shape of slaughter and war and misery : and then we think that our egotism can be satiated by regardlessness towards others, and that the violence we suffer can be abolished by our doing violence to others. Has there ever been a greater and more fearful mistake ? Why not acknowledge now that we have been wrong, and that the way we have taken to, must lead to a hopeless degeneration ? Why not comprehend at last that egotism cannot succeed, unless it dissolves in altruism, and that a reasonable altruism must needs lead to perfect individual bliss ? This clear and simple axiom is the basis of that time-honoured doctrine which forms *the legacy of the last Arhat*, and which, even if taken as a symbol, still represents such a noble image of Eternal Truth.

Having been asked so often as to what I think to be the merit of Jainism as a practical religion, I have tried to give a short answer to-day, which the general public might be able and willing to follow. At first sight, it might appear to be a one-sided answer, because it is based solely on the problem of the mutual relations of individual and society. Still, this problem being one of vital importance, and it being, as I said before, the very touch-stone by which the value of a religion can be objectively ascertained, the above expatiations may stand, as a kind of introduction into the spirit of Jainism.

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